

**Challenger Society for Marine Science**  
Strategy and Implementation  
Framework 2024-2029



# Challenger Society for Marine Science

## Strategy and Implementation Framework 2024-2029

### Mission

The Challenger Society for Marine Science is the learned society for marine science and marine scientists in the UK. It was formed in 1903 and is named after the ship *HMS Challenger*, which was the vessel used in one of the most important marine science expeditions ever conducted. This global expedition, audacious and ground-breaking for its era, is regarded by many as the birth of modern oceanographic science ([https://challenger-society.org.uk/History\\_of\\_the\\_Challenger\\_Expedition](https://challenger-society.org.uk/History_of_the_Challenger_Expedition)).

The Society is a Limited Company and Registered Charity run by an elected Council of volunteers. Its mission is to stimulate and enhance the production, use and impact of new knowledge about the ocean, generated through research and education and via supporting the activity of the UK marine science community. The Society seeks to grow and strengthen the UK marine science community, enhance connections within the community, energise new scientific thinking, and increase the dissemination of marine science and its impact on the public, external partners and stakeholders.

The Challenger Society welcomes any and all members with interests in marine science, technology, education, outreach, policy and all other related aspects. It is committed to developing a community that is free from discrimination, and that supports equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility, allowing all individuals freedom of expression and full participation in its activities.



**>500 members**  
from a range of career stages



**6 Special Interest Groups (SIGs)**  
covering different areas of marine science



**Biennial Challenger Conferences**,  
attracting up to 500 delegates from around the UK and beyond



**>5k social media followers**



**Ocean Challenge** community  
magazine published twice a year



**Financial support** for an energetic  
and visible Early Career Researcher  
network



**Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and  
Accessibility** working group



**Over £10k of Travel Awards** and  
**Stepping Stone Bursaries** each  
year to outstanding Early Career  
Researchers



**Majority contributor of the UK  
subscription to the Scientific  
Committee on Oceanic Research  
(SCOR)**, playing an important role in  
the formation of international working  
groups



**A presence in major industry  
shows and outreach events**, raising  
industry sponsorship for membership  
activities



# Strategic Aims

The strategic aims of the Challenger Society for the period 2024-2029 span three overarching categories:-

A blue-toned graphic featuring a large white number '1' in the top left corner. The background shows a stylized map of the world with a white wavy line representing a coastline or ocean current. The entire graphic is enclosed in a light blue border.

## Support and grow the UK marine science community

- to advance the study and application of marine science through enhancing research and education;
- to promote equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in marine research, for the benefit of the whole ocean science community;
- to grow the Society, increasing its positive work across a broader representation of the marine research and associated communities;
- to recognise and celebrate excellence in the marine science community.

A graphic with a color gradient from orange to blue. It features a large white number '2' in the top left corner. The background shows a stylized map of the world with two white wavy lines representing ocean currents. The entire graphic is enclosed in an orange border.

## Enhance connections within the marine science community and stimulate new scientific thinking and activity

- to forge new links between ocean scientists with shared or related interests, so as to stimulate their collective research;
- to disseminate knowledge of marine science to the public with a view to encouraging a wider interest in the study of the seas and an awareness of the need for their proper management.

A graphic with a color gradient from red to blue. It features a large white number '3' in the top left corner. The background shows a stylized map of the world with three white wavy lines representing ocean currents. The entire graphic is enclosed in a red border.

## Increase the dissemination and impact of UK marine science

- to maximise the contribution of UK scientists to international ocean science efforts;
- to stimulate two-way collaboration between the marine science research base and industry/commerce;
- to liaise with Government and other key stakeholders concerning policy regarding the need for, and use of, marine research.

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***Thanks to obtaining the Challenger Society travel grant I was able to participate in a research cruise to South Georgia. This experience gave me the opportunity to collaborate with scientists from a wide range of backgrounds, disciplines, and research institutes, which provided invaluable insights and connections. I returned from the cruise with an even deeper passion and motivation for studying ocean processes.***

**Josephine Anselin** British Antarctic Survey

# 1 Support and grow the UK marine science community

## a. Education and Outreach

**Our overarching goal is to increase access to marine science for all those in the UK who wish to know more about the oceans.** Our aims are to advance the study and application of marine science through research and education, and to disseminate knowledge of marine science to the public with a view to encouraging a wider interest in the study of the seas and an awareness of the need for their proper management.

### We will do this by:

- developing links to established education programmes such as the [Access Project](#);
- organising workshops and school visits;
- organising Education and Outreach events linked to the biennial Challenger Society Conferences;
- building our visibility of online education and outreach resources, to provide educational videos about marine science and climate change that can be accessible to all.

### Our measures of success will be:

- increased public media content, including the development of a new YouTube Channel for the Challenger Society over the next three years;
- a greater online presence of the Society over the next three years, as well as an improved Challenger website.

## b. Awards, Fellowships, Travel Grants and Bursaries

**Our overarching aim is to recognise and support excellence in UK marine science, for people across every career stage and from all backgrounds.** We also aim to provide or arrange, in suitable cases, financial assistance to students and other early career researchers (ECRs) in marine science. We currently do this via our biannual award of Challenger Fellowships and the Challenger Medal, Challenger Meeting prizes, ECR travel awards, and our Stepping Stones bursary scheme. We also operate our Chris Daniels award, named after marine biogeochemist and advocate of early career researchers Dr Chris Daniels, which is aimed at ECRs who want to establish a forum to discuss specific challenges and resources in the field of marine science.

### Over the duration of this strategy, we will look to build on this support by:

- instituting a career-grade Fellow of the Challenger Society for Marine Science (FCSMS);
- increasing the travel award amounts to at least reflect inflation;
- awarding an additional ECR award for researchers seeking to extend their marine science research in a new direction;
- streamlining and modernising our application systems for funding and awards;
- working with the Equity, Diversity, Accessibility, and Inclusivity (EDIA) working group to review the diversity of award and bursary applicants.

### Our measures of success will be:

- a higher proportion of successful and well-funded travel awards in three years' time;
- the successful introduction of a new ECR award for research;
- positive feedback on a more straightforward application system;
- baseline diversity data regarding award and bursary applicants over the next three years.



### **c. Equity, Diversity, Accessibility, and Inclusivity (EDIA)**

**Our aim is to promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in marine research, for the benefit of the whole ocean science community.** We aspire to be a hub for EDIA good practice within the UK marine science community through the publication of EDIA articles, attending and speaking at conferences and meetings, and by providing advice and signposting to other EDIA organisations.

**For the duration of this Strategy, we will look to enhance current activity by:**

- developing a formal review process to assess the compatibility with EDIA principles of Challenger Society processes and policies;
- working across Council to develop a fair and secure means of establishing diversity statistics;
- expanding the EDIA section of the Society's website to include more resources;
- reaching out to the wider marine science community by leveraging influential leaders to spread EDIA messages, e.g. by integrating EDIA into scientific presentations; maintaining an ongoing presence at marine science conferences; and developing online training on EDIA principles.

**Our measures of success will be:**

- development of a route to create a GDPR-compliant database for collecting diversity statistics of our members;
- improved website content developed by the EDIA working group, including links to good-practice guidelines and EDIA surveys, articles and initiatives;
- the presence of online training on EDIA principles for the Society's institutional representatives in three years', which could later be rolled out more widely.



## d. Membership

**Our overarching goal is to grow the Society's membership whilst increasing engagement and participation from members.** We are looking to increase opportunities for members to join the Society, to improve membership retainment rates in non-conference years, and to ensure the Society remains GDPR compliant.

### We will do this by:

- reinvigorating the Challenger Institutional Representatives network to increase promotion of membership;
- increasing routes by which members can join, such as with two-year complimentary membership included in the Conference fee;
- raising awareness of the Society, for example by attending conferences (e.g., Oceanology) and via Institutional Representatives;
- offering free undergraduate membership to draw this ECR cohort into the Society;
- improving members' experience, including by improving email communications, providing greater opportunities, and redesigning the website.

### Our measures of success will be:

- a 10% increase in membership every year (~ 40 new members);
- a reduction in membership expiration in non-conference years from ~14% to <10%.

## e. Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

**Our main objective is to provide support and training opportunities for ECRs in the UK marine science community.**

The Challenger ECR network allows engagement with external stakeholders and networking with senior scientists, and encourages dialogue and discussion when planning for future needs and challenges of ECRs in the UK marine science sector. Our vision is to fill the areas often overlooked by other ECR training programmes, and provide opportunities for members to expand their skills sets in areas specifically relevant for marine science.

### Our aims for the duration of this Strategy are to:

- attract more ECR Challenger Society members from a greater range of backgrounds and UK institutions;
- develop more training and networking opportunities for the Society's ECR members;
- increase visibility of ECR opportunities within the Society by liaising with the EDIA Working Group, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and external early career research networks.

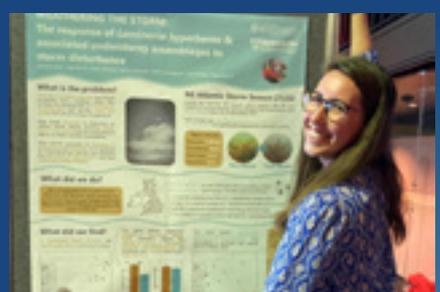
### Our measures of success will be:

- increased levels of participation in our events;
- positive feedback from surveys of the ECR network, wider membership, at Conference (e.g. ECR mixer) and the virtual events.



*Attending the International Temperate Reefs Symposium in Hobart (Australia) was key in my career development, allowing me to present my research on an international stage, learn from leading researchers in the field, and expand my research network – this would not have been possible without support from The Challenger Society Travel Award.*

**Hannah Earp** Aberystwyth University



## 2 Enhance connections within the marine science community and stimulate new scientific thinking and activity

### a. Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

**Our aim is to develop and maintain active and relevant Special Interest Groups (SIGs) within different specialist and technical marine science topics.** Our SIGs hold regular, more discipline-defined meetings, workshops and networking events at least once every two years, including targeting ECRs. We also aim to provide links through these groups to key stakeholders, such as policy-makers and members of the wider scientific community. Our vision is to increase SIG participation by the wider Society members, ensuring that the membership of specialist and technical groups is representative of the diversity of individuals within the marine science community and free from discrimination.

#### We will look to do this by:

- providing a clearer mechanism for members of the marine science community to propose new specialist or technical groups, to be approved by Council;
- conducting a biennial review of the established groups and consult with Council and the wider membership on the need for new groups or closure of lapsed groups;
- working across Council and co-opted members to ensure that the activities of specialist and technical groups fully complement and support the work of Challenger overall;
- working closely with the Membership portfolio holder to use specialist and technical group activities as an opportunity to grow the membership.

#### Our measures of success will be:

- the first complete review of information held on all groups including contact details of group lead, website information and recent/upcoming events;
- in the next three years, a sustained increase in the number of active SIGs;
- positive written and verbal feedback from SIG meetings over the next three years.



## b. Media and Communications

**Our aims are to raise the profile of the Challenger Society by connecting with other marine science organisations, and promote work of members through social media.**

**We will look to do this by:**

- increasing use of relevant platforms (e.g. LinkedIn), including blogging and linking with a wider number of relevant marine science organisations;
- working with the Education and Outreach portfolio to create a YouTube Channel to engage public audiences;
- adding monthly polls and special interest features on the research of the Society's membership;
- targeting undergraduate programmes to engage a wider community across organisations;
- promoting Challenger Society publications through our social media channels;
- engaging with science journalists via online media and other platforms.

**Our measures of success will be:**

- an increase in impressions and reposts by 5%, including an increase in geographic spread of social media hits;
- positive feedback on content, via polls and other routes, and improved ways of accessing information about marine science matters.

## c. Publications

**Our overarching goal is to publish news of the activities of the Society and of the world of marine science.** We produce material intended to present new activities and developments in a way to bring them to public attention. We publish our long-standing magazine *Ocean Challenge*, and online-only newsletter *Challenger Wave*, and have published group papers in other journals. Our vision is to increase readership of our existing publications and investigate expanding into new publishing territory to increase our income and more widely disseminate ocean science.

**We will look to do this by:**

- investigating a new journal partnership, potentially with a related learned society;
- improving the Ocean Challenge website to improve readability, especially for students and members of the public;
- promoting a wide range of marine science disciplines in our existing publications, by encouraging links between marine scientists in different disciplines and providing readers with as broad a view of marine science as possible.

**Our measures of success will be:**

- a way forward planned for a new publication partnership within the next three years;
- greater readership of our existing publications over the next three years, determined by website statistical reports.

*The award was invaluable to my studies, providing me with... the unique and exciting opportunity to meet personally with leaders in my field, tell them about my research, and highlight and find links where our research was complementary and overlapped and could be developed. I am now funnelling these ideas and new connections into funding proposals to begin my own path of research once I finish my PhD.*

**Emily Hague** Heriot-Watt University



# 3 Increase the dissemination and impact of UK marine science

## a. UK input to the Scientific Committee on Ocean Research (SCOR)

**The Scientific Committee on Ocean Research (SCOR) is an international non-governmental non-profit organization, which supports research that addresses interdisciplinary science questions related to the ocean.**

Our overarching goal is to provide UK input and best practices into the SCOR processes at an international level. We aim to grow the UK engagement and support across the full portfolio of SCOR international activities, ensuring that the UK SCOR committee fulfils its role in representing and developing leadership potential across the diversity of UK Marine Science.

### We will look to do this by:

- providing annual reviews of working group proposals and feeding back suggestions for best practice;
- compiling data on the engagement of UK scientists with SCOR activity;
- highlighting gaps and developing a new call for membership in association with the Challenger EDIA group.

### Our measures of success will be:

- a report on the gaps in UK engagement with SCOR activities, produced over the next three years;
- a greater number of UK-led SCOR working groups;
- baseline diversity data regarding the the UK SCOR committee and for those engaging with SCOR activities.

## b. Industry Liaison

**Our overarching goal is to act as a conduit of information between the Challenger Society and UK marine industries.** We work to enhance the academic and commercial aspects of marine science in the UK by strengthening linkages between the two. This portfolio also works with the other more technology-based societies such as the Society for Underwater Technology (SUT), IMarEST, (institute for Marine Engineering, Science & Technology), and the Society for Maritime Industry (SMI) to facilitate a multi-way dialogue on matters affecting all parties. We seek financial support from industry for Challenger Society events and outreach where relevant, and work to ensure Challenger members and Council are fully appraised of relevant innovations and topical issues from that sector. This enables innovations from industry to be inspired and driven by the requirements of academic marine science, and the more integrated uptake of new innovations as they become available.

### We will look to do this by:

- strengthening links between the Challenger Society and other relevant societies, including SUT, IMarEST, SMI, along with direct links with companies working in marine technology and innovation through increasing our industry network;
- enhancing the use of the Challenger Society ECR network to highlight career opportunities in industry to the next generation of UK marine scientists, and promoting the availability of non-research opportunities within the commercial “operational oceanography” sector.

### Our measures of success will be:

- a widened industry network associated with the Society over the next three years;
- an established series of Challenger Society ECR-industry networking events;
- an increase in industry sponsorship for Challenger Society conferences, meetings and other events.



### c. Policy Liaison

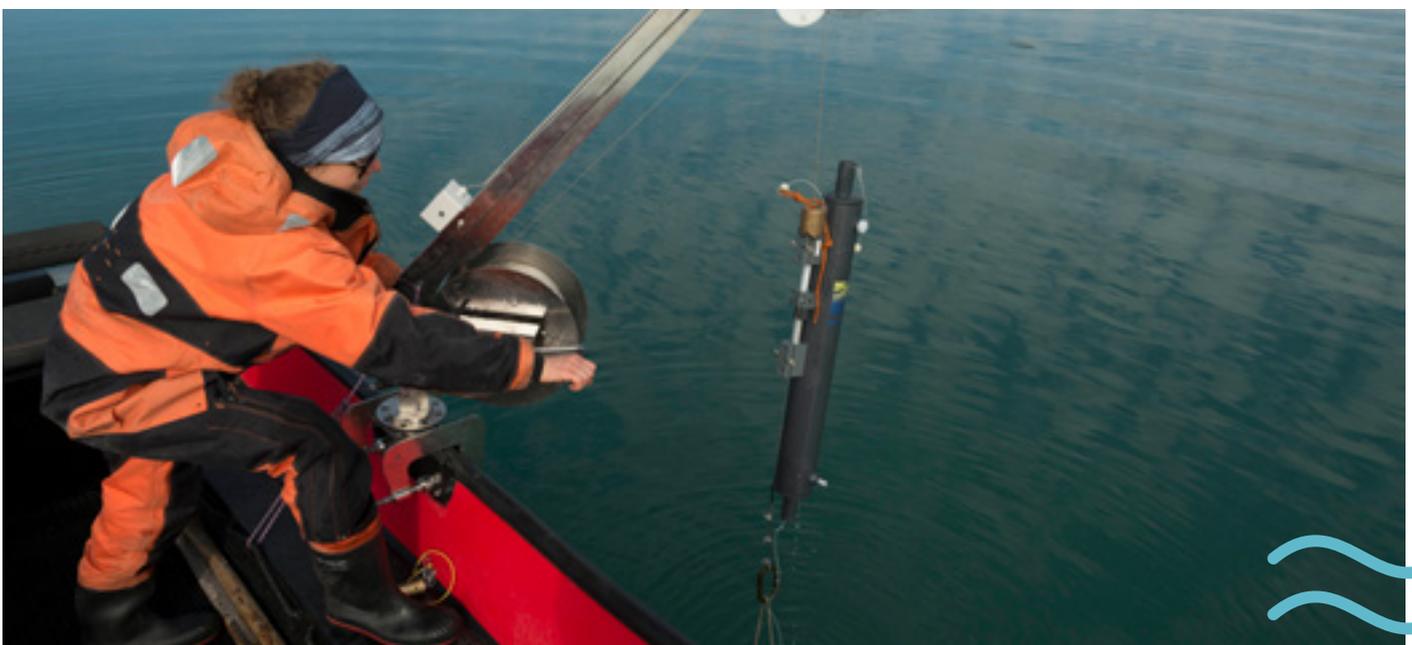
**Our aim is to ensure the UK Government have rapid and easy access to the wider marine science community, ensuring that policies can be built on the best available evidence and that our community's expertise can be widely used.** We also want Challenger to be key in future horizon scanning, again ensuring Government policy can react to changing circumstances identified by science. In turn, we shall use our relationship with government to help our members leverage funding opportunities, where appropriate, by ensuring our work has a clear and relevant link to impact in policy and regulation.

#### **We will do this by:**

- developing strong relationships with science leaders in key Government departments including Defra, and Arms-Length Bodies such as Cefas, where marine science is needed for decision-making;
- ensuring our SIGs expertise can be readily supplied to Government in key and topical policy areas, such as Deep Sea Mining;
- working to ensure the Challenger Society members seek appointment to relevant government committees and panels relevant to their experience;
- working to ensure that ECRs are active in seeking internships with Government departments and that more established career scientists seek out fellowships and other similar arrangements in Government - we shall do this by using our developing links with key Government staff;
- actively marketing the Society, and our publications, to government scientists and proactively seeking their membership;
- working closely with other scientific institutions and societies to provide a focus for expertise when engaging with Government;
- working to encourage the Challenger Society and its SIGs to provide regular policy briefings to Government.

#### **Our measures of success will be:**

- in the next three years Challenger Society members will be appointed to relevant Government committees
- in the next three years early and established career members of the Society being appointed to Government internships, fellowships and similar
- in the next five years the Society sees a significant uplift (ca. 30%) in the number of members who work in Government and its agencies

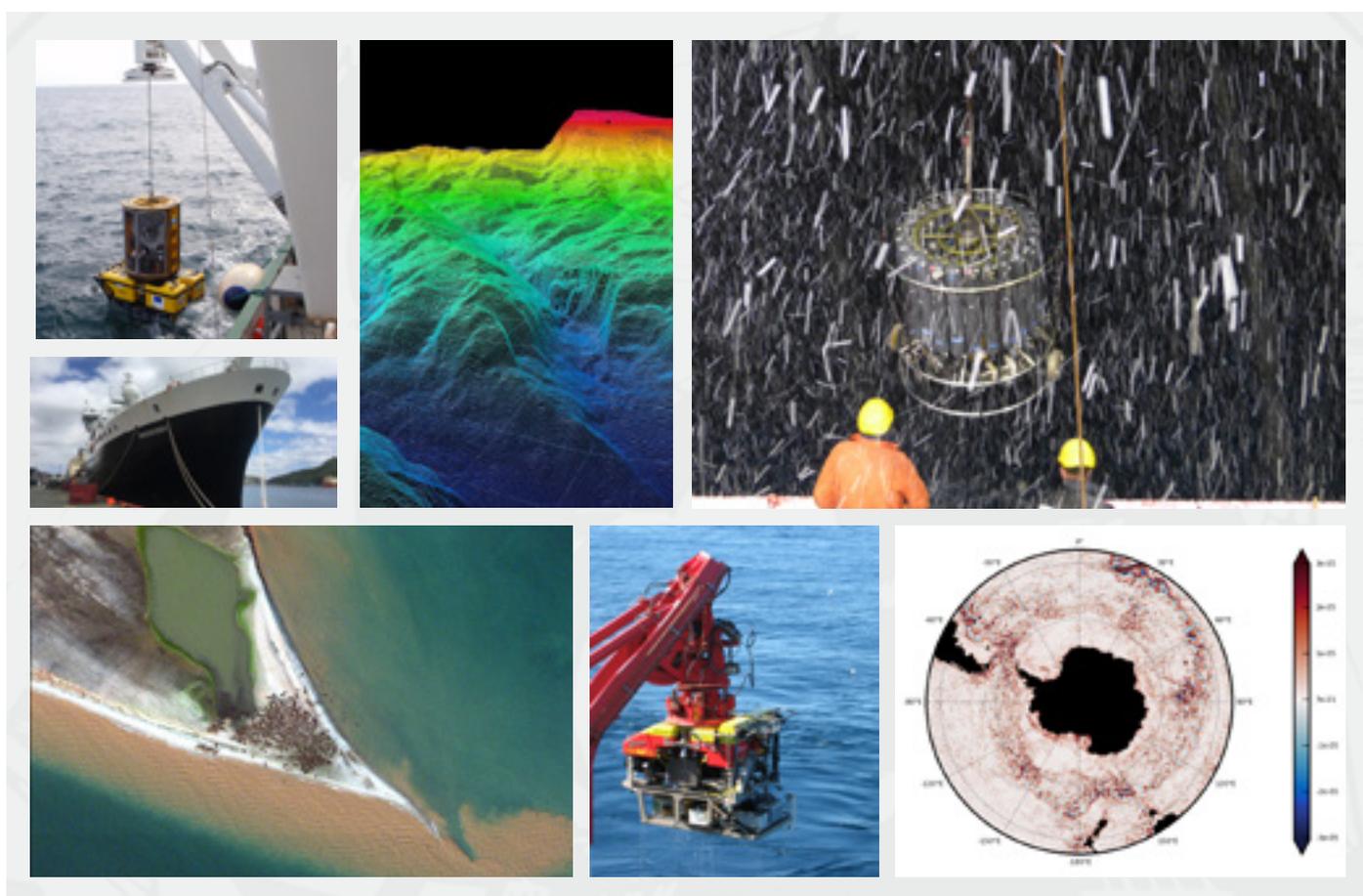


## Closing Statement

The Challenger Society for Marine Science is the flagship learned society for multidisciplinary ocean research in the UK. We recognise that marine science as a discipline is changing with the increasing use of emerging technologies and the growing need for effective and honest science communication. Our workforce is evolving, and will benefit from increased equity, inclusion, diversity and accessibility within the field.

The Challenger Society 2024-2029 strategy acknowledges that a new roadmap is needed to support and grow the UK marine science community, enhance connections within the marine science community with stimulate new scientific thinking and activity, and increase the dissemination and impact of UK marine science. Structural changes in our own organisation are needed to achieve this ambitious new strategy, including expanding the Presidential terms and introducing new Council members. We will also revisit our strategy every five years to assess whether we have met our measures of success, and to ensure we can adapt to new needs and requirements that may arise.

**We look forward to supporting and promoting the flourishing UK marine science community over the next five years and beyond.**



*The stepping stones bursary's one of the few ways ECRs are able to pursue opportunities to develop their own career in a direction they would like. I used my bursary to attend a workshop that was on a subject not directly aligned with the project I'm currently working on but related to research ideas that I was keen to develop... I made many new connections through this workshop and was subsequently invited to a follow up workshop to help draft a science plan for a new international project as a result."*



**Alastair Lough** Leeds University





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